European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia
Observatoire Européen des Phénomènes Racistes et Xénophobes
Europäische Stelle zur Beobachtung von Rassismus und Fremdenfeindlichkeit

EUMC

Summary Report on Islamophobia

in the EU after 11 September 2001

Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001

on behalf of the

EUMC

European Monitoring Centre
on Racism and Xenophobia

by

Christopher Allen
Researcher
and
Jørgen S. Nielsen
Professor of Islamic Studies

Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations
Department of Theology
The University of Birmingham

Vienna, May 2002

Preface

Following the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) implemented a reporting system on potential anti-Islamic reactions in the 15 EU Member States.

With the present synthesis report the EUMC presents a comparative analysis of acts of aggression and changes in attitudes towards Muslims and other minority groups across the European Union in the wake of 11 September. The report is based on 15 country reports provided by the EUMC's RAXEN network of National Focal Points (NFPs) in all EU Member States.

The report's findings show that Islamic communities and other vulnerable groups have become targets of increased hostility since 11 September. A greater sense of fear among the general population has exacerbated already exiting prejudices and fuelled acts of aggression and harassment in many European Member States. At the same time, attempts to allay fears sometimes led to a new interest in Islamic culture and to practical inter-faith initiatives.

The report's recommendations are drawn from examples of good practice in overcoming fears and tackling prejudice, which the NFPs identified in many EU Member States. Politicians, the media and individual citizens can play important parts in reducing tensions and promoting understanding among different faiths, cultures and ethnic groups.

International events such as the 11 September attacks, as well as the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, continue to have a destabilising effect on the social and political fabric of European society. Now more than ever we must establish meaningful intercultural dialogue and promote practical initiatives to bring communities together and tackle prejudice, disaffection and marginalisation. The report makes specific recommendations to this regard and it is our hope that these will be used in a pro-active way by EU Institutions, governments, faith leaders, civil society organisations and the media.

Bob Purkiss
Chair of the EUM

Beate Winkler
Director of the EUMC

Executive Summary

Following the tragic terrorist attacks in the USA on 11th September the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) was quick to realise that there might be a negative impact on attitudes to Islam and Muslims in the fifteen Member States of the European Union. The EUMC's RAXEN network of National Focal Points (NFPs) were asked to provide a series of five reports each on a short term basis upon which the situation could be monitored till the end of the year 2001. Only the first two sets of reports were published by the EUMC on its website.

The present report was requested by the EUMC as a synthesis of all of this material, both published and unpublished. As requested by the EUMC, it firstly offers a summary of developments in each country This is followed by a critical appraisal of the results, focusing on the methodologies used for collecting and evaluating the data, and assessing the problems associated with trying to achieve comparative assessments across the EU. The following section seeks to identify common dimensions of responses across the various countries and to suggest explanations for different elements of the responses. In addition, many of the country reports recorded initiatives, private and public, to counteract expected or actual negative responses arising out of the events of 11 September. It was judged most constructive to incorporate these into the final sections of recommendations.

1. Country Reports

This section summarises the contents of the submitted reports from each of the respective NFPs and covers the following issues:

- acts of violence, aggression and/or changes of attitude in the EU population towards ethnic, cultural and religious minorities, especially Muslims and other vulnerable groups and victims;
- measures of anti-Islamic actions and reactions:
- good practices for reducing prejudice, violence and aggression;
- reactions by politicians and other opinion leaders

The reports provide a basis of knowledge upon which the further sections can be considered. In general however:

- **acts of violence/aggression:**
  relatively low levels of physical violence were identified in most countries, although verbal abuse, harassment and aggression was much more widespread. Muslims, especially Muslim women, asylum seekers and others, including those who 'look' of Muslim or Arab descent were at times targeted for aggression. Mosques and Islamic cultural centres were also widely targeted for damage and retaliatory acts.
- **measures of anti-Islamic actions and reactions:**
  the picture remained mixed, where in a number of countries latent and/or pre-existent Islamophobia was seen to find expression in the mentioned acts of violence/aggression. This was reflected in the increase of activity by far-right and neo-Nazi groups. Other forms of nationally determined ethnic xenophobia were also given a greater impetus. A renewed interest in Islamic culture was identified, although this did not necessarily equate to an increased acceptance.
- **good practice to reduce prejudice:**
  numerous inter-faith initiatives, especially between the Abrahamic traditions were undertaken as were similar initiatives emanating from Muslim communities themselves. Academic institutions and other organisations aided the situation with events, debates, seminars and meetings to discuss relevant issues. A number of campaigns for intercultural tolerance and awareness were launched.
- **reaction by politicians and other opinion leaders:**
  the role of national politicians, both governing and in opposition was considered where the vast majority offered conciliation and solidarity with Muslim communities. Some however chose to remain silent whilst a few made unfortunate and somewhat unnecessary statements. Some NFPs noted that political capital was made where immigration and 11 September became entwined. Increased attention by the media was identified by the NFPs as being both positive and negative, largely depending upon the respective country. Instances of sensationalism and stereotypical representations of Muslims were noted.

Critical Appraisal

This section assessed the reports submitted, considering them both as an entirety and separately, highlighting positive and negative issues as well as good and bad practice. It considers the respective NFPs' representative accessibility, systematic viability, and most relevantly, their comparative lack of standardisation. In achieving this, the different perspectives and methodologies utilised are discussed, paying particular attention to the collection and collation of data, the reliability and appropriateness of sources, and the subsequent EU-wide comparability of the reports. As part of the consideration of sources, the following are assessed: monitoring agencies and central data collection units; Muslim and other minority organisations; the media; the Internet; and 'word of mouth'. Very little comparative value actually existed between the reports and the respective NFPs, and this issue is considered here and in 'Recommendations', where a number of suggestions that may begin to overcome such differences are included.

2. Explaining the trends, actions and reactions

As with the 'Country Reports' section, and in line with EUMC requirements, this section follows the same four-part format, although good practices were incorporated in the final section dealing with recommendations. This section attempts to offer some explanations for the main themes and consequences that were identifiable across the EU. The explanations incorporate such issues as:

- **acts of violence/aggression:**

  the 'visual identifiers' of Islam and Muslims appeared to explain why certain groups and individuals became targets for hostility more so than others. Such visual identifiers included Muslim women wearing the hijab, turbans, Islamic buildings and property, and general physical appearance, including those who 'look' rather than actually are Muslim. Concerns about asylum seekers and the issue of immigration also increasingly overlapped with issues relating to 11 September, providing an explanation for a rise in an albeit sometimes pre-existent hostility towards such groups.

- **measures of anti-Islamic actions and reactions:**

  11 September brought about a greater sense of fear across the EU, where anxieties about the perceived threat from potential internal terrorists and reciprocal attacks in Europe became incorporated into those prejudices that

were already identifiably existent in numerous nationally constrained manifestations of ethnic xenophobia. Many far-right and neo-Nazi groups capitalised on this, combining a wider awareness of an apparent threat from Muslims and those prejudices that already existent to locate new platforms from which their voices could be heard. Both ethnic, and more generalised forms of xenophobia found a new impetus.

- **reaction by politicians and other opinion leaders:**
  as mentioned, most leading political voices offered a message of conciliation and solidarity with Muslim communities as a seemingly pre-emptive attempt to ward off an anticipated backlash of anti-Muslim sentiment. Negativity and stereotypical perceptions of Muslims did appear to be much more reinforced in the public domain where derogatory comments were made in the political sphere. The overall impact of the media remained contentious and difficult to substantiate. Whilst there was evidence of an asymmetrical balance between media incorporating sensationalism and stereotypes and those providing balance and constructive dialogue, no evidence exists to suggest to what extent media are influentially causal. However, such claims cannot be completely dismissed either.

3. Recommendations

Following on from those identified instances of good practice, a number of recommendations seek to develop the interest generated in the grass-roots in Islamic culture with an 'information offensive' based upon cultural, academic and educational initiatives, supplemented by a range of inter-religious and intercultural awareness events. Regarding media, instances where they had begun to deconstruct inaccuracies and stereotypes and had similarly begun to work in conjunction with researchers and Muslim organisations were highlighted as initiatives that could be undertaken elsewhere. Other examples of good practice included the suggestion of Muslim organisations opening dialogue with the media by monitoring and constructively challenging unfair negativity as and when it appears. Other recommendations were made for EU member states where balanced policies towards asylum seekers must be developed, where anti-racism and anti-Islamophobia programmes must be initiated, and the issues of social marginalisation must be tackled. The positive steps taken by

many politicians in the aftermath of 11 September were identified as an example of good practice that can be developed and subsequently built upon.

A further report one year on from 11 September is suggested, as are two new EU-wide research projects. The first is to understand the way in which Muslims, both inside and outside of Europe, are perceived by the respective indigenous populations, and the other, is to assess and understand the impact of the attitudes of the EU population towards asylum seekers and political refugees in the contemporary climate.

Contents

1. Introduction

Following the tragic attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) was quick to realise that there might be a negative impact on attitudes to Islam and Muslims in the fifteen member countries of the European Union. To follow closely the situation, on 12 September 2001 the EUMC implemented a monitoring mechanism. It was decided, as a matter of urgency, to monitor the situation in the 15 Member States by asking the EUMC's RAXEN network of National Focal Points (NFPs) to produce on a short-time basis national reports.

The NFPs were asked to cover the following topics:

1. Acts of violence or aggression and changes in the attitude of the EU populations towards ethnic, cultural, religious minorities, especially Muslim/Islamic communities but also other vulnerable groups or new types of victims, related to the terrorist attacks in the USA.
2. Good practices for reducing prejudice, violence and aggression.
3. Reactions by politicians and other opinion leaders including initiatives to reduce polarisation and counteract negative national trends.

In all over the period till the end of the year 2001 the NFPs were asked to work on five consecutive reports. The first set of reports was published by the EUMC on its website on 9 October (http://eumc.eu.int/publications/terror-report/index.htm). The second set of reports covered events until 19 October and was later also published on the same website. The third set of these covered the period until 23 November and the fourth set till the end of the calendar year. The final set of reports presented a summary and analysis of the events of the whole period for each country.

The present report is a synthesis of all of this material. As requested by the EUMC, we first offer a summary of developments in each country. This is followed by a critical appraisal of the results, focusing on the methods used for collecting and evaluating data and in particular assessing the problems associated with trying to achieve comparative assessments across the EU. The following section seeks to

identify common dimensions of responses across the various countries and to suggest explanations for different elements of these responses.

Many of the country reports recorded initiatives, private and public, to counteract expected or actual negative responses towards Muslims arising out of the events of 11 September and subsequent developments. We have judged it most constructive to incorporate our synthesis of this dimension into the final section of recommendations.

As readers will not have access to the original material, we have referred to information from the country reports simply by country and number, so that a reference such as 'Austria 3' refers to the third report of the Austrian NFP. This provides an indication of the approximate period to which this particular piece of information relates.

2. Country reports

This section offers a very brief summary of all the country reports that were produced in the wake of September 11. Four reports from each country's National Focal Point (NFP) were requested by the EUMC, although not all of the NFPs submitted this many. As the format, content and detail that went into these reports was vastly different, the summaries have attempted to reflect the amount of information and relevant data that each NFP provided. As a result, some summaries will be longer than others. Each summary will consider, in line with the requests of the EUMC, acts of violence, aggression and/or changes of attitude in the EU population towards ethnic, cultural and religious minorities, especially Muslims and other vulnerable groups and victims; measures of anti-Islamic actions and reactions: good practices for reducing prejudice, violence and aggression; and finally, reactions by politicians and other opinion leaders

AUSTRIA

Violent physical attack was very rare in Austria although Muslim women wearing the hijab were identifiable targets for verbal abuse. Sikh men wearing turbans were mistaken for Muslims and inadvertently also became a target although these incidents were also limited. No significant changes in attitude were noted although the NFP did

feel that some pre-existent and latent feelings of xenophobia and Islamophobia were re-awakened by September 11, both of which seemed to be quite widespread. It was felt that a sharp rise in suspicion immediately following events caused an initial prejudicial surge before the situation quickly reverted to normal. One explanation for the ongoing lack of hostility was that Islam has legal status as a recognised faith community.

No direct measures of reaction were noted in the reports although a number of observations gave an insight. A number of opinion polls were conducted although none dealt with issues of Islamophobia. However, some results were indicative where terms such as 'foreigner' and 'Islamism' were largely unpopular, whilst another suggested that ten percent of the population were openly xenophobic. Others showed how 'guest workers' and 'foreigners' were regarded among the least important people in Austria. At the same time, Austria experienced an 'information offensive' where interest in Islam became much more prevalent across major parts vast swathes of the general public. Media response to events was one that was identified by the NFP as being mainly modest.

Dialogue between Christians and Muslims took place, where members of the Viennese Islamic Community participated in events in schools and churches. A wide range of seminars, discussions and lectures were organised by various interested parties which sought to be inclusive of difference in perspective, opinion and religion. Significantly, a Muslim cemetery in Vienna was finally agreed upon following a consultative process that was founded upon a policy of mutual acceptance and equality.

The Federal President, Thomas Klestil invited representatives from the Abrahamic traditions to participate in an inter-religious hour of commemoration from where he stressed the need for a continuation of dialogue between faiths. Voices from the Muslim community reiterated that legal recognition had dampened any hostility towards them as Austrian Muslims could identify with Austria much more easily, meaning that they could play a more active and participatory role.

BELGIUM

In the direct aftermath of the attacks on the US, no physical assaults on Muslim communities were reported, although verbal attacks were frequent. Changing attitudes towards ethnic, cultural and religious minorities, especially the Muslim communities was noted. Despite an absence of physical attacks, a growing intolerance of Muslims was acknowledged, especially in Brussels. Verbal attacks against Muslim pupils were common in schools, with both teachers and pupils being responsible. Numerous incidents were reported when female Muslim pupils had the hijab torn from them. Individuals of Moroccan descent and those identified as asylum seekers were particularly targeted in this period. However, the NFP felt that only a low incidence of Islamophobia developed.

On the Internet and SMS text-messages, anti-Muslim sentiment and language dramatically increased. Anonymity probably accounts for this higher incidence of explicit Islamophobia. There was also a marked rise in the activities of the far-right who seemed to target immigrants and Belgians alike. A growing sense of anti-Semitism was also noted.

The Belgian NFP organised a collaborative platform from which to combat racism along with thirteen other umbrella organisations. The NFP also initiated the “Racism Sucks” and “La haine? Je dis non” campaigns in the Flemish and French communities respectively. A smaller scale campaign had fifty three organisations, including trade unions, NGOs, immigrant organisations, foundations and integration centres, supporting a statement promoting democracy, peace and an open society.

Whilst the Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt declared that the war was against terrorism and not Islam, the NFP launched a campaign asking political parties to support a common declaration of mutual respect. All of the democratic parties, excluding Vlaams Blok, have signed the declaration. Muslim leaders also called for calm so that hostility and violence was not reciprocated.

DENMARK

Following the attacks on the US the NFP noted a dramatic and prolonged upsurge of both verbal and physical attacks on Muslims in Denmark, although it simultaneously

stated that Danish media were already 'drenched' with negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims. Typically it was verbal and physical threats being made, particularly to those visually identifiable Muslims, in particular women wearing the hijab. Included in this observation were a significant number of death threats. Attacks were also aimed at mosques and commercial property belonging to Muslims. Graffiti, arson and the use of firebombs were all noted. Muslims were not the only targets, and ethnic minorities from all backgrounds reported an increase in the levels of verbal abuse and harassment.

Much of what occurred post-September 11 drew heavily upon pre-existent manifestations of widespread Islamophobic and xenophobic attitudes. The issue of 'foreigners' - immigrants from Third World and Islamic countries - was already in the public domain in Denmark, where issues of nationality and a rise in the number of asylum seekers became, post-September 11, entwined with undifferentiated debates, and indeed Islamophobic stereotypes and discourse, regarding Muslims as potential terrorists. Numerous Islamic websites were inundated with hate speech and the amount of anti-Muslim text messages increased dramatically. A number of opinion polls confirmed that the Danish majority believed that September 11 had made them become more negative towards Muslims, where the vast majority of the population felt that Muslims should be made to take lessons in Danish democratic values. Another opinion poll showed that almost half the population believed the war against terrorism had a religious connection. The far-right was also increasingly more vocal, with the Dansk Forum calling for a boycott of Muslim businesses.

Copenhagen police intensified patrols following a series of meetings with representatives from ethnic minorities. In support of an open air concert against xenophobia in Copenhagen, various human rights organisation began actively protesting against Islamophobia and other prejudices.

Denmark was the only country that had national elections during the reporting period and the aftermath of September 11 was a vital part of campaigning for this. Initially various positive statements were made by leading politicians, including the Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, although at the same time Danish Muslims were called upon to affirm that the Danish constitution is above the Qur'an. Many Muslims

interpreted this as a stance that indiscriminately subjected them to suspicion. Throughout the election campaign, the issue of 'foreigners' was central. Most political parties seized on the event of September 11, the Danish People's Party explicitly portraying Muslims as 'our enemy', so much so that the party leadership was reported to the police for violation of laws against hate speech.

FINLAND

Few identifiable changes in attitude or acts of aggression were noted by the NFP, although those Muslims who looked 'different' to the indigenous population acknowledged a difference and became much more visible targets for verbal abuse and prejudice. Incidents were few and tended to be insults in the workplace and on the street. The idea of Muslims as 'different' was noticeable in the abuse of women wearing the hijab. By the end of the reporting process, the situation was felt to have returned to that of pre-September 11.

Overall, actions and reactions to the events were almost entirely positive. The media in Finland were specifically noted in this respect, acting with responsibility towards Muslims and other ethnic minorities. Various platforms for Muslim voices were provided, and a strong anti-racist and anti-xenophobic message was expressed in *Helsingin Sanomat*. There was also a rise in the number of younger people reading newspapers, along with a widespread public demand for more information about Islam, with sales of literature on the topic dramatically increasing. Human rights lawyers voiced their concerns over changes to EU legislation that might adversely affect the protection individual rights.

The Finnish Lutheran church declared its concern for intolerance towards Muslims and called for differentiation between Muslims and terrorists. Various universities and communities organised seminars on understanding Islam and a number of peace and solidarity demonstrations were organised following the bombing of Afghanistan. The University of Joensuu announced that a new masters degree programme on Islam and the West will consider the events of September 11.

Political reaction was immediate, with many high ranking politicians stressing the need for peace and tolerance although these steadily decreased over the period of the

reporting. Much debate occurred in the Finnish parliament on drafting and accepting new terrorism laws. Muslim leaders sought opportunities to express gratitude to the Finnish Lutheran church and the wider population for their solidarity.

FRANCE

Whilst the French press did not report incidents of verbal harassment and insults, a rise in everyday tension was identified. Incidents that received press coverage appeared to be low in number, ranging from physical attacks to instances of graffiti. The reports did, however, indicate signs of suspicions developing towards Muslims and those of Arab descent, in particular North Africans, women wearing the hijab and bearded men. Incidentally, the French NFP was the only one to identify 'bearded men' with hostility towards Muslims. The France versus Algeria football match was an event that raised questions in the public sphere about Muslim integration. In the fallout from this event, the debate that followed it had national ramifications. In addition to concerns being voiced about the "Islamisation" of the young in many suburbs and issues relating to social exclusion, the French model of integration and national identity were also embroiled in the debate.

French media were generally identified as being moderate although the recurrence of Islamophobic stereotypes was noted. This limited prevalence of stereotypical and negative terminology was criticised for its reinforcement of racial discrimination that already existed within the national context. Right-wing opinion was mixed, where anti-Muslim sentiments were identified by the National Republican Movement who linked immigration policy to Islamic fanaticism whilst the National Front preferred to focus on American political responsibility.

A voluntary campaign was launched to celebrate Ramadan against a background of events that call for individuals to say no to racial hatred. Ecumenical, interfaith and a range of public debates were organised and the establishment of a new Islam Council of France was suggested.

Political leaders called for calm and distinguished between Muslims and terrorists, and Prime Minister Jospin congratulated the French population for its maturity in this crisis. On a local level, a widespread response adopted by mayors was to take

advantage of the situation by increasing their relations with the Muslim and other communities. However, in the light of both September 11 and the France-Algeria football match, concerns were expressed about the need to develop training programmes for French Imams and the need to organise Islam nationally as well.

GERMANY

Whilst the immediate aftermath of events saw a rise in Islamophobia and more widespread tension, over the reporting period such hostilities did steadily decrease. Physical attacks were quite rare but the levels of verbal abuse increased significantly where Muslim women and children became the most prevalent targets. Muslim organisations also recorded a number of murder and bomb threats. A change in attitude in the public domain was also identified where attitudes towards people of non-German appearance deteriorated quickly.

Muslim groups criticised the medias for not differentiating clearly between Muslims and terrorists although the NFP balanced this by concluding that moderation was clearly seen. Some opinion polls recorded slight changes in public opinion towards religiously motivated wars but not necessarily Muslims or Islam, although such events did initiate significant changes to policies related to German national security. Much speculation was associated with investigating a number of Muslim organisations under new legislation to the extent where the NFP believed that such measures could reinforce suspicions towards the Muslim community. Various Muslim voices, both individual and organisational, felt the same, stating that the entire Muslim community had since been put under general suspicion. As part of this new legislation, a number of mosques were searched on the last day of Ramadan. A greater public interest in Islam developed and sales of the Qur'an and other Islamic literature rose over the period.

A number of initiatives included the Day of the Open Mosque which had a record attendance following September 11. Seminars relating to Islam were organised in a wide range of environments by a similarly broad range of groups and organisations.

Immediately following the attacks on the US, many politicians, religious representatives and opinion leaders emphasised the inappropriateness of equalling

Muslims with terrorists. Many politicians used the Day of the Open Mosque to reinforce this message. However, much political debate was given over to the legislation relating to national security which in some ways overshadowed other political initiatives.

GREECE

No direct physical or personal verbal attacks were reported towards Muslims or any other minority community and, similarly, no shift in attitude was noted. However, the NFP suggested a possible rise in anti-Muslim attitudes due to some Greek Americans being identified as victims of the attacks in the US. Unlike elsewhere in the EU, Greece was unique in its upsurge in anti-American feeling in the immediate wake of September 11. About half the population were identified as supporting this although a concurrent, much lesser increase in feelings of Islamophobia was also noted. The roots of this phenomenon are part of a much wider pre-existent historical enmity that has existed between Greece and the US for over half a century. A sudden rise in the number of asylum seekers also caused some alarmist reactions, although concern was more about the lack of facilities in place to deal with the problem and the role of Turkey with regards to a build-up of refugees on the Aegean coast. But asylum seekers did not become a significant target.

The NFP noted that an atmosphere of mistrust towards Muslims might be encouraged by incidents such as a police raid on unofficial mosques in the Athens. Similarly, the increasing focus of the media on Islam and Muslims had both a positive and negative effect. An increase in the awareness of Muslim asylum seekers in the aftermath of September 11 was identified, although concerns in the public sphere were balanced between issues of welfare on the one hand and Greece's 'carrying capacity' on the other. Only the ultra-right Greek Front party issued explicit anti-Muslim statements, declaring that all Muslims must be incarcerated to await deportation.

Foreign Minister, George Papandreou and the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate organised an extraordinary summit in Brussels in December 2002 in order to promote mutual respect and understanding between mainly Islam and Christianity. Another similar but national event was arranged by Archbishop Christodoulos, head of the Church of Greece for Christian, Muslim and Jewish representatives in Athens.

The government made a number of significant statements about the need to draw distinctions between Islam and terrorism. Politicians and opinion leaders from all perspectives condemned the attacks on the US although a significant number also expressed their sympathy for the Arab world, calling for the disassociation of terrorism from national liberation struggles. Prominent members of the Muslim community in Greece condemned the attacks on the US and disassociated themselves from both 'Islamic fundamentalism' and terrorism, and al-Qaeda.

IRELAND

Whilst initially there was little reaction to the events of September 11, a dramatic upsurge of Islamophobic instances was noted in the second report before things eventually returning to a much more normal state by the final one. Incidents were restricted mainly to those individuals and groups that appeared to be either of Muslim or Arab descent, where visually identifiable Muslim women, asylum seekers and some of the small Sikh community became targets. Some 'Asian' tourists were also targeted. Attacks were, on the whole however restricted to instances of verbal abuse. One example of this was the number of abusive telephone calls that the Islamic Cultural Centre in Dublin received following September 11.

British tabloid newspapers that are printed in Ireland were identified as being somewhat sensationalist, although this was the only significant reference to the role of media in Ireland in potentially shaping or influencing public opinion. In the campaigning for general elections in 2002, small organisations with alleged links to the British National Party have been actively seeking to target asylum seekers. Whilst an overall rise in manifestations of racism was noted, the NFP were unable to draw any substantial links to either the activities of this xenophobic group or the events in the US.

The 'Know Racism' governmental public awareness programme will be launching a major media and communications strategy that will include the issue of Islamophobia. Other initiatives included meetings with the Gardai (police), the Equality Authority and local authorities as well. A public attitudes survey was also commissioned for 2002 which will include, for the first time, issues relating to Islamophobia.

The Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern, and a number of other government ministers were immediate in their calls for calm in the aftermath of September 11. A number of verbal and visible gestures that showed solidarity and support with the Irish Muslim community followed, with the Islamic Cultural Centre in Dublin welcoming many high profile well-wishers. Derogatory comments towards asylum seekers by a member of the ruling party were criticised by many in office, including the Prime Minister himself. Representative voices in the Islamic community in Ireland expressed their condemnation of the attacks in the US whilst simultaneously emphasising their gratitude for the support offered to them by the vast majority of the Irish population.

ITALY

Initially the NFP noted that there was a lack of any reprisal against Muslim or other ethnic minorities, although an upsurge in acts of aggression did occur during the period covered by the third report. A marked change in attitude was noted at the same time towards immigrants and asylum seekers, as well as those of Arab descent. During this period, it seems that public expressions of hate, Islamophobia and ethnic xenophobia became legitimised, with more incidents being noted in the northern and central regions of the country, a region where mainstream political activity was much more xenophobic and where the far-right were also much more vocal. Examples of such incidents included numerous verbal and physical attacks on individuals, attacks on property including mosques and businesses owned by Muslims, and a paper bomb attack on the home of an outspoken imam. However, the NFP suggest that attitudes towards Muslims might not have significantly changed because a 'pre-existent' anti-Muslim prejudice was already identifiable in certain aspects of Italian culture. The situation did seem to begin to calm by the end of the reporting process but an ongoing subtle feeling of Islamophobia seems to have remained.

Opinion polls confirmed that changes of attitude did occur towards Muslims and those of Arab descent, where issues of Christianity and Islam, and indeed immigration became noticeable. There was an increase in the attention relating to Islam and Muslims in Italy, although this has been at best, ambivalent. Similarly, the media broadened their coverage of Islamic issues although this was seen to merely reaffirm Islamophobic stereotypes. Some articles in the press were highly inflammatory and

sensationalist, prompting the NFP to note that the subsequent impact of these should not be underestimated. It was also felt that extremist Muslim voices were being disproportionately represented. A local and much more grass-roots opposition and mobilisation against Muslim activity, community ventures and the development of mosques was recorded, and seasonal Muslim casual workers stated that property owners were increasingly reluctant to rent them accommodation. This may have been inspired by those in the political far-right who launched a range of highly explicit anti-Muslim campaigns and initiatives, which were by and large supported by some in the more mainstream of Italian politics.

Despite the positive messages being issued by some academics and religious leaders these were largely drowned out by those much more explicitly anti-Muslim voices. A number of meetings and conferences were organised both nationally and locally to discuss Islam and the West, with a Christian-Islamic Summit in Rome and Florence where politicians, journalists, academics, Italian and foreign Muslim and Christian experts engaged in debate. Other ecumenical and interfaith were also identified, most notably the Pope's invitation to Catholics to join Muslims for a day of fasting on the last day of Ramadan.

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's statement in Berlin concerning Western culture being 'superior' to Islamic culture had a significant impact both within Italy and internationally. He did later state that his words were taken 'out of context' and met with representatives from a number of Muslim countries. He also attended the Christian-Islamic summit in Rome. Some political parties reinforced their anti-immigrant campaigns with explicit anti-Muslim elements, the most prominent being the Northern League. Calling for Muslims to be refused entry into Italy, members of the party including an MEP, have remained active in seeking political capital out of the events.

LUXEMBOURG

Only a few isolated instances of anti-Muslim sentiment were expressed following the events of September 11. These included a few anonymous telephone calls and some insults in the school environment. The Luxembourg NFP acknowledged that the low incidence of such sentiment was due to the way in which the Muslim community were

well integrated into wider society, and that there are very few visible identifiers of Islam to be seen. No mosque exists and women wearing the hijab are extremely rare. Luxembourg was also identified as a peaceful and tolerant country.

Whilst no shift in attitudes was identified, a Pakistani cultural organisation did have its long planned cultural evening event cancelled at short notice due to the international situation. An Indian event, planned a few weeks later was allowed to continue. However, various media sought to act responsibly in the immediate aftermath and included balanced and informed information about Islam and Muslims. This was reciprocated at a grass roots level where there was a significant rise in the sale of Qur'ans and books relating to Islam.

The Imam of the Islamic Cultural Centre, Servet Ockatan, participated in an ecumenical mass for victims at the capital's cathedral. The Imam also stated, in a radio interview, that the doors of the Cultural Centre are always open to those wishing to know more about Islam.

No relevant data was included by the NFP regarding politicians.

NETHERLANDS

The NFP noted their serious concern about the proliferation of prejudice towards Muslims and those of Arab descent. A significant number of incidents relating to September 11 were also noted although, as the NFP states, the relatively high number of acts of aggression or hostility may be because of the good infrastructure for monitoring such. In these incidents, verbal abuse and hostile treatment were the most prevalent, with visibly identifiable Muslim women wearing the hijab being probably the most significant target. Graffiti and vandalism were also noted, with instances of arson and attempted violence. Targets of attack included mosques and an Islamic school. Whilst the NFP identified a trend of increased hostility in the first two reporting periods, it would appear that this has again reduced in the latter two. However, in this period of decline, changes in attitude towards Muslims and a resulting trend of hostility were identified in the workplace.

Reactions within the Muslim community saw women going out without wearing their hijabs and others reluctant to send their children to school unaccompanied. Such

sentiments may have been a direct result of the 'mass hysteria', as described by a prominent psychologist, that was inflamed by a series of opinion polls in the Netherlands. Large numbers of the population were in favour of the deportation of Muslims whilst others were keen to see asylum seekers from Muslim backgrounds being refused entry to the country. Another poll declared the Dutch population's belief that Islam presented them with a very real threat. The results of these polls were widely reported in the press where equally inflammatory headlines accompanied them. Certain sectors called for the various media to exert restraint and balance in their reporting as an increased hostility towards Muslims could ensue. Muslim spokesmen agreed with this and were confirmed by the results of another poll where Dutch Muslims believed the media to be particularly biased. Far-right groups increased their activities, where those such as the Populist Party used explicit Islamophobic language, whilst others such as the New National Party acted similarly to recruit new members.

A series of governmentally inspired regional debates concerning integration were organised for the capitals of the twelve provinces including Amsterdam and Rotterdam, whilst the National Bureau against Racial Discrimination organised an event entitled, 'Images of the enemy' where anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia were all considered. The National Association of Journalists organised a conference, 'A month after' to explore the way in which media had covered September 11 and agreed to co-operate with anti-discrimination agencies and researchers to assess the impact that Islamophobia in the media has on society. The Dutch Muslim women's organisation Al-Nisa began a peace initiative, where other faiths were invited to participate, whilst at the same time various Christian initiated interfaith initiatives took place.

Repeated calls for tolerance and calm towards Muslims were made from various members of the government, including the prime minister. Similar speeches were made at local government level as well. Much more visual gestures were made too, with politicians taking the opportunity to visit mosques and 'mixed' schools.

PORTUGAL

The overall picture was one of reconciliation between both Muslim and non-Muslim. No evidence exists of any physical attacks on any particular community as a direct consequence of September 11. A few mosques suffered vandalism whilst verbal assaults were limited mainly to visually identifiable Muslim women. Sikh men wearing turbans mistakenly became targets for anti-Muslim verbal abuse and some sources identified suspicion towards those of Pakistani descent.

The NFP note that the extremely low levels of hostility experienced following the attacks on the US were due to the historical relationship between Portugal and Islam, the integration of Portuguese Muslims into wider society and their 'invisibility'. Likewise, a growing interest in Islam was identified throughout the population. Media were on the whole balanced but some stereotypes and derogatory coverage was present.

The NFP were not aware of any specific positive initiatives in direct response to September 11, although a few unconnected events were noted.

The Portuguese government in the immediate aftermath of events organised a meeting between all the major religions to promote a united image against tolerance. However, most of the political debate was connected to national security and immigration, particularly by those on the right. The leader of the Portuguese Muslim community later criticised the government for its apparent ambivalence towards the Muslim community in the aftermath of events.

SPAIN

Initially no incidents of aggression or hostility or any changes in attitude were identified by the NFP, although a few instances of mosques being attacked were noted. The number of events increased throughout the reporting period, verbal assaults began to be reported and the attacks on property continued. One death was reported, although it was unclear whether this could be directly linked to the events of September 11. However, a shift in attitude towards Muslims was noted in the discourse of individuals 'on the street', where the NFP reported that such a shift had spread widely. Most of this expression of anti-Muslim sentiment was directed towards

those of Moroccan descent, which drew upon a deeply embedded and pre-existent ethnic xenophobia that was in evidence long before September 11. Those who 'looked' Muslim were also increasingly discriminated against and issues relating to immigration and asylum seekers became entwined with the entire debate. The NFP feel that whilst the impact is declining, it may take some time for reactions and prejudices to disappear.

Spaniards were very concerned with a possible 'war of civilisations' and how this might impact given their geographical proximity to Islamic countries. One source where this was evident was the media, which were identified as using increasingly stereotypical language and images towards Muslims. The NFP was unsure however what impact this might have on the populist attitudes of the indigenous population. The Muslim community was reported as living in fear of reprisal attacks, and security around mosques was stepped up. The annual National Day of Saudi Arabia was cancelled and a number of North American companies postponed conferences that they had planned in Malaga, which has a large Muslim population. Neo-Nazi 'skinhead' groups became much more active in areas with a high percentage ethnic population. Other far-right groups were also identified as having found a new impetus in this period.

Instances of good practice were limited, with the press offering a similarly limited amount of positive indicators. One example, was where *El Pais*, which sought to include Muslim voices and differentiation, discussed the coexistence of the Abrahamic traditions and provided an introduction to Islam and the Qur'an. The Council of Organisations for Immigrations (CEI) also attempted to present a more balanced understanding of Islam through various media.

Initial response from political leaders was limited and quiet, and mixed reactions from opposing voices were acknowledged. Some Muslims felt that the government had refrained from offering them support and called for them to be more vociferous in order to give the situation more attention. Similarly, a number of Muslim organisations asked the government to make a positive gesture towards them to support their own endeavours.

SWEDEN

Some violent incidents as a response to September 11 were noted, although an increase in verbal abuse towards Muslims and those of Arab descent was the most significant. Muslim women and schoolchildren as well as mosques became the most identifiable targets. A rise in anti-American and anti-Semitic sentiment was also acknowledged. Whilst the NFP has noted a steady decrease in Islamophobia related to events in the US over the entire period, the murder of a Muslim woman of Kurdish descent by her own father in January 2002 was identified as an event that might initiate a further wave of anti-Muslim, if not anti-Kurdish sentiment.

Islamic websites became a significant target for explicit Islamophobic messages. The media were also noted for their at times irresponsible coverage of events, especially one newspaper that mapped the connections between Osama bin Laden and a network of other Muslim organisations in Sweden. The far-right also significantly increased their activities, although there appeared to be a balance between groups becoming increasingly more Islamophobic, such as the Sweden Democrat group, whilst other neo-Nazi organisations including the National Socialist Front voiced support for the attacks on the US.

A number of interfaith initiatives were developed, including the co-operation of the Swedish Christian Council and the Muslim Council. The Swedish Committee Against Islamophobia was also launched.

As elsewhere, leading politicians immediately condemned the events but also declared their fears of a growth of anti-Arab sentiment. Others took the opportunity to make visible gestures such as visits to mosques. A particular incident concerning the ruling Social Democratic Party was where three Swedish residents of Somali descent - one of whom is a member of the party and prominent parliamentary candidate for the forthcoming general election - were named on a US State Department list of possible al-Qaeda supporters. All assets and funds were frozen and the three individuals have subsequently been declared bankrupt. The State Department continued to refuse access to relevant documentation. At the time of the last report, the situation was still ongoing.

UNITED KINGDOM

A significant rise in attacks on Muslims was reported across a range of media in the immediate aftermath of September 11. Numbers of incidents of violent assault, verbal abuse and attacks on property were noted, some of which were very serious. Muslim women wearing the hijab were easily identifiable and widespread targets for verbal abuse, being spat upon, having their hijab torn from them and being physically assaulted. A number of prominent mosques around the country were similarly attacked, ranging from minor vandalism and graffiti to serious damage through arson and firebombs. Threatening and explicitly Islamophobic messages were also widely circulated over the Internet and through e-mails. Telephone calls, anonymous post and threatening messages left on car windscreens were observed. Sikh men also found that they became a significant target.

The press widely reported on the backlash against British Muslims, although reaction was mixed. A range of voices could be heard in the media although a disproportionate amount of coverage was devoted to extremist Muslim groups and British Muslims who declared their willingness to join an Islamic war against the West. Other less sensationalist Muslim voices were mainly overlooked. Reporting included very basic Islamophobic stereotypes shaping the popular image of young British Muslim men. The far-right British National Party launched a highly explicit Islamophobic campaign. Drawing heavily on issues of the inability to co-exist with Islam, it reasserted Christianity as being under threat from Muslims in the UK. The BNP included isolated Sikh and Hindu voices in their campaign, despite these being denied by the wider respective communities.

Sensitive policing and co-operation in crime prevention between police forces and local Muslim communities was credited with reducing attacks both on individuals and property, including mosques. Local councils and other organisations were included in this process. The Muslim Council of Britain sought to represent the opinions of most British Muslims. As part of this, it sought high profile meetings with senior ministers in the government and other notable leaders in London. A nation-wide Islam Awareness Week was organised for November to encourage interest and understanding. A number of other events, including interfaith meetings, were held nationally, regionally and locally.

Political leaders from all sides, including Prime Minister Tony Blair, immediately expressed their condemnation with messages calling for restraint and differentiation in Britain. A few dissenting political voices were heard including the former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, although these were largely dismissed by all political tendencies, including the leader of the Conservative Party, Ian Duncan Smith. The Prince of Wales called for peace and tolerance on visiting the UK's largest mosque and held a reception at his official residence for young Muslims. The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey called for calm and invited to an international seminar on Christian-Muslim relations, with the support of the prime minister, to be held in January 2002.

3. Critical appraisal

The NFPs were asked to undertake similar tasks, but comparisons between them are very difficult as they range from small NGOs and research centres to nationally funded governmental and independent organisations. This raises some points for discussion. The first relates directly to the type of organisation that the individual NFP is. Having such diverse organisational origins must impinge upon the results that are produced and indeed the perspective that research is undertaken from. Also the question of sources used plays an important role. Some NFPs drew heavily upon the statistics and information that was made available by Muslim organisations and other representative voices that existed within their respective countries. However, for those countries that have a much broader and more diverse Muslim community, the appropriateness of Muslim organisations and representative voices as a valid source raises some interesting questions. Can any Muslim organisation or representative voice ever speak for an entire country's community?

With the diverse character of the NFPs, it is not surprising that their output was equally variable. Doubts about the impact of such a diversity of groups and organisations on the process of comparing the results will persist. This is not to say that the reports were not of a high standard, but rather that the monitoring systems, the processes of data collection, the methodological collation and subsequent output have not met the levels of comparability that are necessary to make reliable pan-European conclusions.

One essential factor was the variation in the methodologies deployed. To enable a critical reading of these reports, it would have been useful if all NFPs, as some of them did, had included a brief explanation of their methodology, stating how they designed their processes of collation and evaluation, and indeed why those particular method was. Such information would have highlighted problems that might have been experienced, and at the same time helped to address some of those issues that are now raised with regard to representative accessibility and viability.

Those NFPs that are or have had access to a monitoring centre for racial and/or religious discrimination were able to incorporate much wider reflection of their

particular situation, especially with regard to reported acts of aggression and/or violence towards particular ethnic and religious groups. However, monitoring agencies need to have the necessary infrastructure and communication processes to ensure an access to and a knowledge of their sources. Without this, organisations can become both unrepresentative and invalid.

Another significant source that many of the NFPs used was that of news coverage in the media, incorporating the various communications media that can be included within this definition (in this instance, specifically excluding the Internet). However, as with dependency upon Muslim organisations, it is necessary to consider the validity and appropriateness of the media as a source especially when entire reports were based upon them. As a result, any representation that exists within the media is already a 're-presentation' of facts seen through the sometimes distorted eyes and politically associated bias of a medium that are believed by many concerned parties to be inherently Islamophobic.

Another medium that appeared in many of the NFPs reports was that of the Internet. It is worth noting here that the Internet tended to be used in two ways. The first was to provide further supporting information, typically in directing the reader to websites belonging to Muslim organisations, NGOs and online versions of newspapers for example, whilst the other were websites that had ‘interactive facilities’ such as chat rooms, message boards or newsgroups. The appropriateness of the second type is debatable. Questions relating to the accuracy of popular and widespread sentiment or feeling must be asked. Substantiating evidence from chat rooms and discussion pages is a difficult task because the anonymity of participants leaves far too much to speculation. As with most other sources, therefore, it is not only the accessibility of the source but also the representative validity of the Internet which leaves doubts over its methodological appropriateness. The Internet therefore can be a wholly unrepresentative communicative medium where anonymity and socio-economic factors exclude and obscure conclusions that are at best speculative and unfounded. Only if a balance is established media can be used as a source of information: supplementary rather than used in isolation.

Word of mouth and unnamed sources, both of which can be identified in a number of reports, take the process of trying to overcome these problems even further. First off all there are the questions relating to validation and accuracy. As with media reporting, news of events transmitted by word of mouth have been 're-presented' and can differ from the reality of the event that occurred.

In concluding this section of critical appraisal, the single most overriding feature of the reports is that there is only limited methodological comparability between them. However, the reports do allow a unique insight to what was perceived to be happening within the respective countries, as presented by the NFPs. In this respect, the process of producing these reports was justified and wholly worthwhile because they have provided a means by which nationally derived trends and shifts that occurred could be identified and considered.

However, for future development, both the EUMC and its respective NFPs are advised to work more closely together to develop a standard basis of data collection so that much greater comparability between EU member states will be possible. Research by the NFPs and the subsequent reports that they produce cannot be entirely dependent upon any one particular source. Consequently, it may be necessary for some NFPs to develop access to a wider range of sources so as to present a more complete spectrum of opinion and experience embodying the diversity that exists within the EU member states.

4. Explaining the trends, actions and reactions

In this section, it is the intention to begin to suggest some explanations for the themes and consequences that were largely visible across the EU. It is not the intention to address every issue that was identified, but to consider the themes which spanned national borders and the social, political and cultural changes in the post-September 11 period. To achieve this, the explanations will be organised under the headings which were proposed by the EUMC for the NFPs to follow. So this section of the report will offer an explanatory focus:

- The acts of violence, aggression and identified changes in attitude of the EU population towards vulnerable groups, especially Muslims and Islamic communities, and any new type of victims
- Measures of anti-Islamic action and reaction related to 11 September
- Reactions by politicians and other opinion leaders including initiatives to reduce polarisation and counteract negative trends

The instances of good practice have been included in the 'Recommendations' in section five of this summary report. Although many of the identified good practices were nationally specific, there was a feeling that they could be easily transferable and implemented elsewhere in the EU. It seemed more appropriate, therefore, to include these as part of the follow-up process.

Violence, aggression and identified changes in attitude

Across the entire spectrum of the EU member states incidents were identified where a negative or discriminatory act was perpetrated against Muslims or an entity that was associated with Islam. However the proliferation, seriousness, frequency and measure of violence differed widely across the EU. Despite this, it was clear that a number of underlying themes were identifiable. In order to attempt to suggest or explain what stimulated these shifts in attitude and the subsequent rise in violent reactions against Muslim and other ethnic minority communities, it is necessary to consider these underlying thematic factors. It is the intention of this section to explore these and offer some explanations.

Visual Identifiers

Irrespective of the variable measures of violence and aggression that were identified, or indeed the shift in attitude of the member states' populations, the recurrence of attacks upon recognisable, visible traits of Islam and Muslims have been the most prolific element of every NFP’s report. It seems that behind the vast majority of attacks and infringements upon specific communities and individuals was the fact that they were identified as Muslims, whether they in fact were or not, by something that could be recognisably associated with Islam; this we call visual identifiers. Whilst these were not necessarily in themselves the reason for any attacks, it would seem that they were the single most predominant factor in determining who or what became the victim of retaliation. As Islam or Muslims were perceived by some across the EU to warrant a retaliatory attack, the visual identifiers provided a stimulant that offered an outlet for the venting of anger or some other denigratory sentiment.

The most prevalent of these were those visual identifiers that were associated with traditional Muslim attire, most obviously highlighted by the hijab or headscarf that many Muslim women choose to wear. The hijab seems to have become the primary visual identifier as a target for hatred, with Muslim women being routinely abused and attacked across those countries in the EU where Muslim women could be identified in this way. A selection of incidents that were reported by the NFPs included Austria where the NFP stated that "women with headscarves have increasingly been insulted" (Austria 2); Denmark where a woman wearing a hijab was thrown out of a taxi because of her alleged responsibility for the attacks on the World Trade Centre (Denmark 2); Germany where a number of women had had their hijabs ripped from their heads before being spat upon (Germany 2); Ireland where the NFP reported that there had been "an increase in verbal assaults directed at women in Islamic dress" (Ireland 1); Italy where a bus driver deliberately shut a door upon a woman wearing a chador (Italy 3); and in the UK, the London *Times* reported that "many Muslims have been spat at and suffered verbal abuse, particularly [those] wearing the hijab" (UK 1).

These were not isolated incidents and similar instances were noted in Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. However, what was interesting was the recognition and subsequent evaluation of the Luxembourg NFP. In its second report,

it identified one of the reasons why it believed that so few incidents had occurred in Luxembourg, namely that this could "be explained by the fact that in Luxembourg, no visible element of Islam exists...women who wear a veil in public are rather rare" (Luxembourg 2). A realisation and acceptance of this observation may have been one of the reasons why some Muslim organisations advised members of their own community to keep a low profile and for Muslim women to refrain from wearing the hijab in public (Portugal 2 & others). All point to an acceptance of recognising the significance and impact of visual identifiers.

Rather than being merely coincidental, this observation would seem to go some way in explaining why the hijab and Muslim women in general had become such a obvious target for verbal and physical attacks. They remain a highly visible entity within European society. Another factor that might also have been a significant determinate in this process is the stereotype by which women in Islam are often perceived in many areas of the west to be second class, subjugated individuals because of the headscarf. It could be that as a result of this common misconception, the hijab became a visual identifier that not only represented the perpetrators of the attacks on the US but also an embodiment of what is in itself stereotypically Islamophobic, namely the headscarf as a statement that is both anti-feminist and anti-Western.

Another significant victim in the rise of aggression across the EU were men who wore turbans. Whilst the turban would not necessarily be immediately identifiable as Islamic attire, in the media coverage of both September 11 and the war in Afghanistan, through the images of Usama bin Ladin, the Taliban and everyday Afghans, the turban became an integral part of the semiotics of that period. However, what happened in many of the EU member states was that this focus upon the turban as symbolically Islamic meant that a rise in hatred and attacks upon Sikhs and their communities became a recurring feature. Anti-Sikh behaviour, whilst readily identifiable, was therefore entirely incidental. Ignorance rather than a definite hostility towards either Sikhs or Sikhism was the catalyst that underlay this worrying development. This is not to diminish the increased hostility that many Sikh communities experienced as was reported in countries such as Austria, Germany,

Ireland, Portugal and Spain but merely to offer an explanation as to why they became legitimised as targets.

As with the turban, another visual identifier that can be equally attributed to both Muslims, particularly reinforced by images of the Taliban and Usama bin Ladin, and Sikhs is the beard. Yet as a visual identifier, the beard was rarely mentioned. In the reports, the beard was identified briefly as a factor underlying a rise in hostility towards Sikhs (Germany 2) whilst only once as a visual identifier of Muslims (France 2). Whilst the beard is debatably a more common visual identifier of Muslims than the turban, this would seem to imply that many of those that did change their attitudes or indeed participate in acts of aggression or violence towards Muslims, acted against visual identifiers that were essentially media-derived from the post-September 11 period. This might possibly offer some insight also into the consequential impact in society that media images and representations can have. It could also have some relevance to the targeting of Muslim women who were repeatedly highlighted in the media as being particularly oppressed in Afghanistan under Taleban rule. There may be some correlation, therefore, between the visual identifiers of Afghan women wearing the burqa with Muslim women in the EU wearing the hijab.

Another focus for acts of aggression and violence were mosques, where everything from petty vandalism and graffiti, to arson and bomb attacks were reported. As with the case of women and the hijab, the Luxembourg NFP noted that as the country has no mosque the opportunity for attacks was lessened (Luxembourg 2). Due to the very visible nature of mosques, whether they have been purpose-built, as a growing number are, with domes and minarets as a necessary part of their architecture, or are housed within older, previously designated buildings which typically have Arabic signs or some other identifiable element outside them, mosques became a very easy and readily identifiable target. In much the same way, a number of member states that have Islamic schools reported that threats and attacks against them had also increased. This was also the situation in those countries where mosques were due to be opened or were part of a project that was well under way. In such cases, as in Italy, a number of incidents were reported where local residents and town mayors had combined forces to petition against the building and development of mosques for the local communities (Italy 3).

The relevance of the visual identifiers of Muslims and Islam cannot be underestimated. Repeatedly across the entire EU, various NFPs reported incidents where these were either an explicit or underlying factor. However, what seems to have mattered to justify an attack was that the target should be perceived to be Islamic, whether it actually was or not. As the most violent, dangerous and prolific forms of Islamophobic hatred were directed at real people rather than the religious buildings and material constructs of Islam, the vast bulk of violence and aggression that occurred in the post-September 11 period might possibly better be described as 'Muslimphobic' rather than Islamophobic. In other words, perceptions of Muslims became the target.

This is reiterated in a number of observations by various NFPs. The first is one that the Spanish NFP noted: “prejudices and distrust are extended to all individuals whose looks may assimilate them to the Islamic religion” (Spain 3). The second can be seen when the Finnish NFP used the phraseology to distinguish between the Tatar Muslim community “who look like Finnish people” and those Muslims who tend to be political refugees or asylum seekers who “look different than Finnish citizens” in order to explain the difference in hostility that was experienced by some groups of Muslims in Finland rather than others (Finland 2). The final example comes from the Austrian NFP that indicated that the probability of being a victim of verbal abuse was greatly increased even if you were only “presumed Islamic” (Austria 1).

If the observations of the Luxembourg and Portuguese NFPs, which directly attributed the low instances of aggression and violence in their country to the “invisibility of the Islamic community” (Portugal 2), are correct then visual identifiers as a factor in explaining the rise in aggression and violence in the EU would seem to be extremely valid. It would seem that the explicitly visual elements of Islam have not benefited from any process of cultural tolerance where such elements remained conclusively outside the remit of visual, European acceptance. So a much wider understanding of this factor might be required, where one’s physical appearance, in conjunction with the much more historically and religiously rooted understandings, becomes a benchmark against which Muslims are gauged. The ‘them and us’ scenario therefore – the almost eternalised xenophobic dualism – becomes embedded into Islamophobia, where religionism and xenophobia become interwoven into the very fabric of each

other. They blur the boundaries where anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim fear and hatred overlaps with the fear and hatred of a euro-centrically perceived enemy ‘other’. Assimilation and similarity of appearance therefore would seem to be highly relevant factors in establishing to what extent other cultures can be accepted or tolerated ino a different host environment.

However, while the visual identifiers do not explain why some EU citizens felt the need to exact revenge or engage in some retaliatory act in response to the events of September 11, they offer a valuable insight into the process by which victims were identified and subsequently subjected to terror and hate. Therefore it might be fair to conclude that, despite the many pronouncements that were made in the aftermath of September 11 to the effect that Muslims were not to blame, nor that a war against Islam was being undertaken, many deliberately targeted their victims so that Muslims and Islam were the targets of increased hostility and hatred. In this respect Muslims became more vulnerable, which is a situation that probably remains true in the contemporary context with international tensions and uncertainties relating to the ongoing ‘war against terrorism’ being very high in the consciousness of many in the West. In this respect, it would seem that there is a very real possibility that those visual identifiers that are mentioned here will be the tools for identification, upon which Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments will continue to be founded for the foreseeable future.

Asylum seekers, political refugees and immigrants

Following on from the visual identifiers that were recognisable in all the reports, the second most prevalent group of people that seemed to be ever more vulnerable as victims of hostility were asylum seekers, political refugees and immigrants[1]. To try and put this into some context, over the past few years there has been a considerable influx in the numbers of immigrants that have entered the EU, mainly as asylum seekers or political refugees from the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and Eastern Europe.

[1] The use of the descriptive term ‘asylum seeker’ will from hereon be used as a representative term that includes not only asylum seekers but also political refugees and immigrants unless otherwise directed.

Whether the UK is representative of the entirety of the EU is questionable, but for some time prior to September 11 there was a sensationalist and often vitriolic campaign being waged by many of the national tabloid newspapers against asylum seekers and refugees that may provide some additional insight. Focusing on the perceived negative traits of the immigrants and the detrimental effect that they might have on society, in particular the welfare state, asylum seekers and refugees have been largely presented as a threat to British society and its associated values, emerging as the somewhat irrational, yet xenophobically charged ‘enemy within’. It would probably be fair to add that similar beliefs, if not identical circumstances, could be identified in Denmark and other EU member states as well. In a much wider context, asylum seekers have achieved very little cultural absorbancy[2] into European society.

Issues relating to absorbancy for this group were evident prior to September 11. What added to this already pre-existent sense of hostility was that some of the perpetrators of the attacks on the US were believed to have resided in some EU countries as asylum seekers. The ‘enemy within’ therefore acquired an additional set of less favourable and damaging attributes to the stereotype that had already been in existence. So whilst British media stories pre-September 11 were concerned with issues of national allegiance and Western values, similar stories were given a greater xenophobic dimension in the post-September 11 period. There were recurring headlines such as, “I was born British, but I am a Muslim first”[3], and “First it’s my religion, then my family…and finally it’s my country”[4]. The link that this type of article attempted to make was that already within ‘our’ midst were those who were allegedly willing and able to replicate the attacks of September 11 here, with an argument against allowing any further immigrants into the country as these would, no doubt because of their religious or ethnic profiles, support similar acts.

This point was reinforced by the disproportionately large media voice granted to some of the extremist fringes of the UK Muslim community. As it was reported that many

2 “Cultural absorbancy” is the term used by Gerd Nonneman to establish a gauge by which an unknown and perceived alien culture can be ‘absorbed’ into a different host environment. Issues relating to social cohesion, assimilation, tolerance and acceptance all impinge upon this measure. NONNEMAN, G. (1996), "Muslim communities in the new Europe: themes and puzzles" in NONNEMAN, G. et al (eds.), *Muslim communities in the new Europe*, Reading: Ithaca, pp.3-23.

3 Daily Mail, 17 September 2001, p.13

4 Mail on Sunday, 23 September 2001, p.12

of the individuals active within these groups had entered Britain as asylum seekers, such instances were used to justify hostility in order to stop them eradicating British values and exploiting its social welfare system at the same time. As a result, the distance between issues relating to asylum seekers and those of September 11 began to be gradually narrowed, until the two had almost become identifiable as one. This process had brought about a synonymity of enemies, and as such, a complimentary synonymity of stereotypes and objectives too. Asylum seekers therefore became, very crudely, potential terrorists who were willing and capable of inflicting similar attacks on Europe as others had on New York. And in the large part, these were also Muslims, or at least perceived to be Muslims.

Whilst this was a specifically British context, it would seem that similarities could be identified across the EU. From the reports themselves, some countries such as Finland and Greece seemed to have engaged with the issues relating to asylum seekers in a slightly different way than elsewhere. However, the UK situation was indicative of what was happening elsewhere. In Denmark for example, much of the third report was dedicated to the developments linked to the political issues and themes that were so much a part of the national elections. The Danish NFP wrote, “certainly 11/9 has not detracted from the ‘foreigner’ debate in Danish politics…11/9 has added terrorism and terrorists to an already hefty debate on ‘foreigners’, and more specifically Muslims, presently taking place” (Denmark 3). Similar conclusions can be drawn in the Netherlands where despite the source and focus being completely different, an opinion poll found that 21.5% of respondents wanted to refuse asylum seekers from Muslim countries.

Yet, as was noted with regard to the visual identifiers, being an asylum seeker alone did not explain why they became a target for retaliation. Asylum seekers were not a group that had become vulnerable just because of a change in attitude following September 11. Attitudes towards them remained basically the same, but a new impetus was given to justify hostility towards them, because popular understanding of issues surrounding them became increasingly blurred by those of September 11. The enemy within, that had already been established as a threat to the EU, was now being reinforced and embodied with much more dangerous attributes, so that asylum seekers came to be perceived as justifiably valid targets. September 11 therefore gave a pre-

existent prejudice a much greater credibility and validity where a distinct increase in hostility, the perpetration of attacks and the attempts to stop the flow of those genuinely seeking refuge from war and terror became a commonplace aspect of the ensuing period.

Measures of anti-Islamic actions and reaction

This section sets out to try and explain the ways in which anti-Islamic sentiment and expressions have been identified in actions and reactions from a range of different perspectives. Drawing upon instances of the more organised reaction to the events of September 11, and the attitudes of the various populations that existed prior to this date, such explanations may begin to account for certain expressions and reactions being identified by many of the NFPs.

Ethnic xenophobia and an increase in fear

Throughout many parts of the EU in the post-September 11 period, a rise in ethnic xenophobia was identifiable. This type of xenophobia was distinctly separate from the xenophobia that exists within both Islamophobia and indeed the anti-asylum seeker sentiment mentioned previously. Through a greater perceived threat of the enemy within, and an increased sense of fear and vulnerability both globally and locally, this type of xenophobia resulted in many countries experiencing a dramatic increase in the type of prejudices and hatreds that were already pre-existent. Unlike asylum seekers, these prejudices were much more localised and tended to remain within the boundaries of individual member states. The impact of New York therefore seemed to have a direct impact on the way that an increased sense of hostility and lack of tolerance was exerted against pre-existent, usually historically perceived foes. In much the same way as the underlying explanations relating to asylum seekers, it provided a catalyst of fear that, to some degree, offered a newly acceptable justification.

Fear seems to be the vital ingredient in this phenomenon. Reports from those member states that had individuals arrested in connection either to the events in the US or to Al-Qaeda, irrespective of whether the arrests were justified or not, suggest that the arrests initiated a seemingly greater sense of the proximity of ‘enemies’ both old and

new. Fear and awareness not only included Muslims and asylum seekers, but also those ‘enemies’ that traditionally existed against a backdrop of national, cultural and historical tensions. Following September 11, the reassertion of the stereotypification was a real phenomenon. Its nature was quite indiscriminate where groups, communities and nationalities (including Muslims and asylum seekers) and the negative traits and stereotypes that were attributed to them, were significantly reaffirmed. Both old and new enemies became legitimate targets.

In Greece for example, where national feeling was split equally between anti-American and anti-Muslim attitudes, the rise in negative feeling towards Muslims further reaffirmed another much more localised pre-existent ethnic hostility, where xenophobic expressions were recorded against Albanians, Bosnians, Turks and those from the FYR Macedonia. As the Greek NFP puts it, traditionally “the distinction between ethnicity and religion is blurred, implicitly identifying all Muslims with either ethnic Albanians or ethnic Turks and thus suggesting that ‘by definition’ they are enemies of Greece since they are either Albanians or Turks” (Greece 2). September 11 and its immediate discourse therefore helped to reassert not only spatially, cross-national xenophobic assertions but also ethnic stereotypes that were by and large restricted to a particular national context.

Similar circumstances were identifiable in Spain as well, where ethnic Moroccans were an identifiable target in this period. The Spanish NFP highlighted this sharply when it wrote that, “in Spain most of the aggressions tracked mix racism towards Maghribian migrants (the ‘Moorish’) with the fear directly arisen from the 11 of September’s events” (Spain 3). However whilst this highlights the relationship between September 11 and acts of aggression towards a particular ethnic group, it does not imply that this was pre-existent. The subsequent observation however that “this distrust was already the norm even before September 11” (Spain 3), reflects that of Nuria del Olmo Vicĕn’s study of Spanish Muslims which notes the “widespread survival in Spanish folklore and collective memory of the idea of the Moor (el Moro)” as a racial stereotype[5]. What the aftermath of September 11 saw was a reassertion of this perception, where the stereotypes, language and attitudes towards particular

ethnic groups made them increasingly vulnerable and susceptible to aggression and attack, which in this case was rigid and nationally localised. Similar examples were also identifiable in other countries as well, including France and Italy.

What this highlights is that the events relating to September 11 brought about a greater awareness of the commonly perceived prejudices that exist throughout many of the countries in the EU. This is not to say that these particular ethnic groups suffered acts of violence or intrusion any more than they would have normally done, however, because it was stated that many of these prejudices were pre-existent to that particular date. Whether these were particularly active or indeed whether they were much more latent remains inconclusive, but significant external evidence points to the fact that they definitely did exist. September 11 does, though, explain why a greater awareness of issues relating to common enemies began to surface; an impetus of a greater awareness, a previously unknown vulnerability, a fear or dread of old and new enemies, supplemented by media speculation, were all contributory factors. When combined with pre-existent ethnic xenophobia, including expressions of Islamophobia, both latent and active prejudices found a catalytic justification. As the Austrian NFP succinctly put it: “resentments, fears and constructions of the enemy, which have formed to historic burdens and a lack in information, now come to the surface. The terrorist attacks seem to confirm old prejudices” (Austria 2).

The Far-Right and Neo-Nazis

Many of the reports indicated a marked rise in the profile and activities of far-right and neo-Nazi groups. To clarify this, in this section the focus will only be upon those groups that remain on the outside of mainstream politics - those which might be termed 'street politics'. Included in this section, are those such as the British National Party (BNP) who, despite having the structure and organisation, remain a politically marginalised quasi-legitimate operation, to those less politically identifiable and fluidly determined groups such as "skins" (Spain 3). The established right wing of mainstream politics is considered in the section relating to 'Reactions to politicians and other opinion leaders'. Such groups therefore used anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic rhetoric, gestures and demands in various countries including Belgium, Denmark,

[5] DEL OLMO VICEN, N. (1996), "The Muslim community in Spain" in NONNEMAN, G. et al (eds.),

France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK. And whilst many of these were able to tap into the increased awareness and resultant fear that was much more prevalent, they not only asserted Islamophobia, but also those pre-existent and somewhat more latent prejudices to provide a newer relevance to their political viewpoint.

Whether this was ultimately to make in-roads into the mainstream of politics remains unclear, but it would appear that circumstances were being sought where they were looking to garner support or gain a wider voice for the particular brand of hatred they were espousing. Whilst some continued to blur the boundaries between Muslims in Europe and the influx of asylum seekers, an increase in anti-American sentiment was noted elsewhere in both France and Sweden, although both were quite minor. A similar reaction was noted in Greece but historical factors were a much stronger determinant in this reaction, where no direct far-right involvement could be identified.

Despite a widespread rise in activity, there was no evidence to suggest there was any collaborative or pan-European co-operation, even though assertions and rhetoric were similar. However, one recurring feature that did appear was the idea and image of Christianity in Europe being replaced by Islam. Drawing upon a European identity where Christianity is an inherent feature, there was a very strong xenophobic theme that inferred that Islam presented a direct threat to the core of European religious values and identity. This included Belgium, where literature was circulated showing Saint Mary's Church in Schaerbeek being converted to a mosque (Belgium 1), and in the UK, where the BNP distributed leaflets in London stating that local churches would shortly become mosques if immediate action was not taken. A similar leaflet was written and distributed directly to members of the clergy. The Sweden Democrat party on its homepage also claimed that the Christian world is under attack, justifying this with the superiority of Western culture speech by the Italian Prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi's (Sweden 2).

The rise in activity and a wider voice does not allow conclusions to be made that popular opinion, either at a grass roots level or elsewhere, was significantly affected

Muslim communities in the new Europe, Reading: Ithaca, p.307.

by the far-right. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the distance between the acceptability of the mainstream and the previous unacceptability of the more extreme, far-right is coming closer together. Any naturalisation of Islamophobia therefore is a cause for concern and should be immediately addressed and countered. So whilst the far-right continued to reiterate its same ongoing messages, such messages may have begun to find a more consensual and sympathetic ear in the wider mainstream. In this observation therefore, it would appear that a shift did occur to the right, whether temporary or otherwise at present remains unclear, where a greater receptivity towards anti-Muslim and other xenophobic ideas and sentiments has, and may well continue, to become more tolerated.

Reactions by politicians and other opinion leaders

In this section, two main threads of explanation are identified. The first is the role of mainstream politicians and the expectation of certain sources that seemed to underlie their various responses. The second is the media, where their impact and role are considered. What did become clear in this respect was that there were very few individuals outside of the political arena that contributed any significant reaction. Whilst certain groups and individuals, including media stars, musicians and poets made limited statements and contributions to the post-September 11 debate, none of their contributions were high-profile enough to shape or influence opinion. As a result, these minor examples have been excluded from this section.

Mainstream Politics

The vast majority of politicians across the EU were immediate in providing a response to the attacks on the US. Many combined condemnation with a call for solidarity with Muslim communities in the West and for the need to differentiate between Muslims/Islam and terrorists/terrorism. One clear example of this was noted by the French NFP, where political leaders "called for calm and for making a clear-cut difference between the Islamic populations" (France 1). Such practices clearly cut across political differences, on both the left and right of centre. But as there was little if any concrete evidence at this particular juncture of changes in attitude - which was incidentally confirmed by the NFPs' initial reports – such an immediate reaction points toward a sense of expectation that required a pre-emptive response to try and

quell any feared anti-Muslim backlash. Whilst the majority made verbal gestures, others such as the Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern who visited the Islamic Cultural Centre in Dublin (Ireland 3), opted for a much greater visible message. The underlying message however was the same: an unspoken expectation that required a clear pre-emptive response.

This was not the only type of reaction, with some leaders being criticised for their lack of vocal and/or visible action. The Portuguese NFP noted that Sheik Munir, the spiritual leader of the Portuguese Muslim community, publicly complained about the apparent ambivalence of the government towards the indigenous Muslim population (Portugal 3). However, despite these apparent or otherwise silences, there is no evidence to suggest that lack of vociferousness had any significant impact either on public opinion or in the way that Muslims or other ethnic minorities were perceived.

This was not the situation, however, in countries where the right-wing of mainstream politics were more active in issuing and perpetuating negative messages. Some of these included explicit stereotypes of Muslims as an integral part of their public discourse, incorporating issues relating to asylum seekers and an undifferentiated attitude towards Muslims in their rhetoric. The most widely reported example of this was when the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, stated "that Western culture is superior to Muslim culture" (Italy 2). Whilst this was later retracted and, indeed, denied by Berlusconi, it attracted significant attention and much unwelcome publicity. It was the only national instance that seemed to cross member state borders and had a significant international effect. Indeed, Berlusconi's words appeared to be so influential that they became a source of justification for a neo-Nazi group in Sweden (see 'Far-right and Neo-Nazis').

It is difficult to establish what influence Berlusconi's words had on Italian attitudes. This is not to suggest that Berlusconi was directly responsible as similar sentiments had been present in Italian politics for some time beforehand (Italy 2). Issues relating to asylum seekers and Muslims following post-September 11 were increasingly blurred and, as was noted elsewhere, became embroiled in Italy’s pre-existent ethnic

xenophobic attitudes, where Islam is still seen as “the old enemy”[6]. The Northern League Party were particularly active in propagating such messages, although other more localised examples were also identified. Ultimately, though, the overall effect of such activity was damaging where a marked change in attitude was identified in the wider Italian population, being attributed directly to, "statements by politicians and articles by opinion leaders which, in some way, have presented Islam, and foreigners in general, as threats to Italian traditions and culture" (Italy 3). Italy in this respect seemed to be one of the few countries where the NFP to a significant extent attributed an identified shift in attitude to political leadership.

A similar example was Denmark where a widespread feeling of xenophobia against asylum seekers and foreigners had already caused much public debate. Much of the Danish NFP’s third report was devoted to this subject, as Denmark was the only EU country to have national elections in the period covered by the reports. Most of the mainstream political parties in the immediate aftermath of September 11 had attempted in some way or another to seek political capital (Denmark 1). Many used inflammatory language and openly mobilised Islamophobic stereotypes to reinforce agendas that had already been a part of their political campaigning. As Jan Hjarnø wrote in his 1996 study of Muslims in Denmark, “there is now a tendency among many politicians and media to make Islam the explanation for all problems related to immigrants and refugees”[7]. The political rhetoric of this period would seem to suggest that such observations continue to be relevant today. Two national opinion polls confirmed this, where in the first, 64% of the population agreed a more negative attitude towards Muslims could be identified, and in the second, a 59% thought the same (Denmark 2). It is difficult to establish links between discourse and acts of aggression or violence, although coincidentally a high number of incidents were reported.

---

[6] ALLIEVI, S. (1997), "Muslim minorities in Italy and their image in Italian media" in VERTOVEC, S. & PEACH, C (eds.), *Islam in Europe: the politics of religion and community*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, p.212.

[7] Hjarnø, J. (1996), "Muslims in Denmark" in NONNEMAN, G. et al (eds.), Muslim communities in the new Europe, Reading: Ithaca, p.300.

In the debate that surrounded the elections, issues of Danish nationality and values were inextricably linked to continued immigration and the presence of 'foreigners'[8], typically being relegated to Islamophobic stereotypes where Muslims became the sole focus (Denmark 3). The NFP noted that it was likely that this type of debate, irrespective of September 11, would have been an integral part of election campaigning. What was not predicted, though, was that ‘Muslim’ and ‘foreigner’ would have become increasingly synonymous. From those instances where the Dansk Folkeparti were reported to the police for hate speech crimes, to less deliberately undifferentiated Islamophobic and xenophobic language, it seems fair to conclude that Danish politicians helped to reinforce negative perceptions Muslims.

Apart from these instances, the role of politicians in the post-September 11 period was one that was largely positive and responsible, where differentiation, calm and co-operation were the essence. Many stood directly with the indigenous Muslim community and offered friendship and allegiance. Other political leaders were less vocal and public in their support, although in these instances it was unknown whether the situation would have been any different with more public assertion or, indeed, whether the situation required it. And finally, there were those countries where some with political responsibility were identifiably inflammatory and Islamophobic in this volatile period. Due to space limitations, only the Italian and Danish contexts have been considered here, although similar, lesser instances were identified elsewhere.

Within this differentiation, evidence to suggest that mainstream political activity directly influenced localised attitudes is sparse. In those countries where political gestures were positive, similar changes in attitude were not. Likewise, where the political hierarchy did not appear to react in any given manner, little correlation can be drawn there either. And in countries where the right-wing of the mainstream were much more active and vociferous, or where they tended merely to reassert pre-existent ethnic xenophobia and indeed Islamophobia, any measure of influence is extremely difficult to establish. In both Italy and Denmark, the levels of hostility and tension did

8 The Danish NFP provided in its third report a substantial exposition of how in contemporary Danish usage the term “foreigner” remains one that is almost entirely reserved for discussing immigrants from the Third World. This has increasingly, in the post-September context become one that has also become substitutable for ‘Muslim’. Non-Third World immigrants have tended to be overlooked and excluded from public debates which are both many and varied.

appear to be higher than elsewhere, although in trying to explain this phenomenon, it is difficult to substantiate to what extent the two factors are interlinked. Similarly, it is equally difficult to show whether there was any correlation between positive gestures and rhetoric, as in the case of Ireland, and a lower number of incidents and reduced attitudes of xenophobia and Islamophobia. It is therefore extremely difficult to either prove or disprove this observation, and the evidence provided by the reports demands that the situation remains inconclusive.

A factor which contributes to bringing xenophobic, racist and Islamophobic views into mainstream politics, and thus to legitimising their role in the public political discourse, is the publicly stated attitudes of leading political figures. During the period covered by this report, we have seen how such statements have probably had a marked negative impact in countries like Italy and Denmark, with more positive impacts being experienced in countries like Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK. The very rapid response of the British Conservative Party leadership distancing itself from statements by Lady Thatcher is particularly worth noting.

Media

The role and impact of the media is one that is contentious and debatable, where interpretation and understanding shape much of what is disseminated. In the light of September 11, there is little evidence to suggest that this task is any less contentious. As a whole, there is little evidence to conclude comprehensively whether the media impacted either positively or negatively. Media are by and large localised entities that do not readily incorporate or present a consistent message across the entire EU. When the media do cross borders, respective interpretations and perceptions are not always understood as being the same. This was highlighted in the first reports of the British and Irish NFPs. Whilst the British made no mention of Islamophobia in its national press, the Irish report noted that, "British tabloid newspapers published in Ireland have also been guilty of sensationalist type reporting which could help create the conditions of Islamophobia" (UK1 and Ireland 1 respectively). As such, critically engaging with the role of the media is one that is fraught with problems.

However, the media's role cannot be overlooked, and in the pre-September 11 period at least, was identified as having an inherent negativity towards Muslims and Islam. Many sources have commented on this subject typically concluding, as Elizabeth Poole does, that "Islamophobia is thus seen by Western media...to be unproblematic"[9]. In this respect, it is necessary that some observations are made. Where positive and balanced attitudes were identified in the various media, NFPs reported on dialogue with the Muslim community and a critical engagement not only with Islam, but also with the topics relating more directly to September 11. In these examples, Muslim voices were given a platform from which to be heard and a cross section of opinion was discussed. In Finland for example, national newspapers such as *Helsingin Sanomat* sought to provide a fair and informative debate. It included discussion by readers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, considering and including responses of other EU countries as well (Finland 1 and 2).

Similarly, the Austrian NFP considered various television broadcasts that dealt with the issues, but sought balance as well. Programmes such as "Constructing Islam as an enemy?" included Islamic experts, whilst "Between fear and hope" included voices from the Austrian Islamic community (Austria 2). In Luxembourg too, representatives from the country's sole Muslim organisation, the Islamic Cultural Centre, participated in interviews and debates on both television and radio (Luxembourg 2). In these and other examples of media positivity, there were neither trends of sensationalism nor stereotypification.

These trends were, however, a feature elsewhere. Sensationalism became a cornerstone of some reporting, whilst an inappropriate and disproportionate focus on extremist elements in Muslim communities became common. This was seen when the Italian NFP expressed concern about a fourteen page article written for the country's largest distributed daily newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera*. Described as being "violent and insulting; the contents explicitly anti-Muslim, anti-Arab and anti-migrant", it caused much controversy and was seen both to incite and offer

[9] POOLE, E. (1997), "Framing Islam: An analysis of newspaper coverage of Islam in the British press" in Hafez, K (ed.), *Islam and the West in the mass media: fragmented images in a globalizing world,* Cresskill: Hampton Press, p.158.

justification for Islamophobia (Italy 2). In acknowledging the seriousness of such assertions, the Italian NFP concluded that media "should not be under-rated" (Italy 2).

As such an observation finds validity in other sources as well, the consequences of negativity and Islamophobia in the media must not be underestimated. NFPs from France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK all noted similar negativity, where a dependence upon historical archetypes and contemporary stereotypes were an apparently integral feature of media coverage. Even issues relating to factual evidence were highlighted by one NFP to be, at best, "quite shaky" (Sweden 2). It would appear then, to some extent, that images and stereotypes are now so deeply embedded and almost necessary to media coverage, that Islamophobia is almost a natural process. This of course is where the role and impact of the media become increasingly worrying, where accuracy and inaccuracy become increasingly blurred and where real Muslims and their stereotypical constructs become indistinguishably one.

An example of such ‘naturalisation’ can be identified in the way that ‘jihad’ has been shaped in contemporary media-speak. Having had its theological context completely removed in the public sphere, jihad offers an immediate and succinct way of defining any violent, militaristic or terrorist inspired Muslim confrontation with either the West or any of its allies. In this way the use of the term becomes widely inappropriate but, at the same time, much more natural because of the prolific and contextualised way it is used. What is concerning is that if 'Muslim' and 'Islam' continue to be skewed in this value loaded way, then they too will become increasingly synonymous with media constructed Islamophobic stereotypes. At this present stage, it is wrong to suggest that this is the reality of the situation but should these processes continue and be supported by indiscriminate, inappropriate and irresponsible usage, then the situation could seriously deteriorate. One particularly worrying statement that the Dutch NFP noted from the media, was where a greater acceptability of Islamophobia and negativity towards Muslims was welcomed as "the end of political correctness" (Netherlands 4).

To try and explain the media's role therefore remains difficult. None of the reports suggested that the media directly caused or, indeed, were responsible for any reported

or identified act of aggression or significant change in attitude. However, this is not to dismiss their impact in any way, and despite there being no direct evidence to suggest otherwise, the media continue to play a major role in the formulation and establishment of popular perceptions in the public sphere. So when certain media were identified as representing Muslims both negatively and stereotypically - sometimes as an almost necessary part of the reporting process - in a situation that was volatile, a greater willingness to be responsible and accountable would have been welcomed. However, some media sectors were responsible and accountable, while others sought to remain balanced and objective, and for this those sources should be congratulated. So whilst no evidence exists to suggest that medias are influentially causal, they also cannot be completely dismissed either.

Conclusion

These explanations are neither exhaustive nor conclusive but attempt to clarify some of the common trends and themes that were apparent in the wake of September 11. No single explanation can completely account for the events that followed those in the US, but this does allow an insight to certain identifiable phenomenon. Likewise, a combination of such can also provide a much more holistic picture. In this respect therefore, the explanations must be considered both in isolation, largely as they have presented here in the text, but also as corroborative contributions as well. What many of them do highlight, however, is the deep-seated nature of Islamophobia and xenophobia. At the same time it is clear that these two concepts are not exactly congruent. Expressions of Islamophobia have certainly in some instances simply been a 'cover' for general racism and xenophobia, in some countries offered legitimacy by the statements of politicians and other opinion leaders. However, there have also been instances in which such expressions have been quite selectively targeted at visibly perceived manifestations of Islam. Indeed, there have been cases where anti-Muslim alliances have been formed, at least locally, between right-wing groups and immigrant and ethnic minority groups, as in the UK where on occasions the British National Party has 'suspended' their generally racist agenda in favour of an alliance (presumably temporary) with Sikh and Hindu extremists. In general terms, however, anti-Muslim sentiment has emanated from a vast array of sources and taken on a range of manifestations building upon premises that were already pre-existent to the events of September 11 and may even have been strengthened by them. The profile and public awareness of Islam and Muslims has certainly been increased, and for this reason alone it will be increasingly relevant for this type of monitoring and assessment procedure to be maintained for the future. What these explanations have achieved though is to present a starting point from which further discussion and consideration can be developed.

5. Recommendations

Building upon the critical engagement and explanations that has been discussed previously, this section will attempt to make recommendations for the EU member states and the EUMC. In line with the good practices identified by the various NFPs, as mentioned in the previous section, ideas for continuing this will also be included. It is these recommendations that will be considered first.

Recommendations of initiatives for good practice

Across the EU in the aftermath of September 11, an upsurge of public interest in Islam was widely identified. This was not only a negative phenomenon, but also a positive one that the Austrian NFP defined as requiring an "information offensive" (Austria 2). As a result, a sharp rise in the sales of Islamic literature including the Qur'an and other informative materials was noted. In building upon this "information offensive", these recommendations and examples of good practice have been chosen because they offer a positive opportunity to aid the process of reducing and indeed reversing trends towards Islamophobia and other xenophobic racism. As a phenomenon that was largely initiated at a grass-roots level of the EU, such an opportunity must be seized with a range of follow-up and complimentary initiatives.

Cultural events are an excellent way of introducing Islam to non-Muslims and can easily build upon any existent interest that might be identified. Such events are also easily transferable to other national settings where good ideas from one member state can be used elsewhere. One example of this was the 'Day of the Open Mosque' which is organised in both Austria and Germany. In Germany, despite it being organised only a few weeks after September 11, it attracted a lot of publicity and was attended by a much larger audience than in previous years (Germany 2). Events such as these can bring communities together in an environment that allows people to question, see and meet for themselves other people, cultures and practices that may otherwise seem alien.

Events can range in size and format from those 'one-off' events, such as those previously mentioned in Austria and Germany, or alternatively may be much more

ambitious as in the recently launched "Best of British Islam" festival in the UK[10]. Being conducted over a period of six months, the festival sets out to highlight a positive and contemporary presentation of Islamic culture that is far too often overlooked. Incorporating events which cover the visual, creative, performing and literary arts, these are supplemented with debates on faith and spirituality, current and community affairs, gender dynamics and Islam's past, present and future. The idea that underpins these and other types of cultural initiatives is that they will reach out, inform and increase awareness of Islam and are highly recommended.

Academic and educational environments are another excellent way through which similar events can be organised. Lectures, presentations, talks and exhibitions were identified by a number of NFPs, either as 'one-off' events or as a more structured programme such as the series of 'integration debates' organised throughout the Dutch provinces to raise awareness and increase dialogue (Netherlands 2). Another such example is currently being undertaken in the UK includes a series of open events at various universities being organised by their Islamic Societies and the overseeing Federation of Student Islamic Societies. Guest speakers from both the Muslim and non-Muslim community come together and debate both religious and contemporary issues concerning Islam[11]. It is suggested that this type of venture is widely encouraged, to encourage both Muslims and non-Muslims to debate issues such as Islamophobia, racism and the plight of asylum seekers in an academic and educational environment.

Non-Muslim faith communities also have a vital role in developing good practice. Two excellent examples of this were highlighted by the Greek NFP. The first was the role of Archbishop Christodoulos, the head of the Church of Greece, in bringing leading figures from the Christian, Muslim and Jewish religions together in Athens, whilst the second was an international interfaith consultation, where the Greek Foreign Minister, George Papandreou, and the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate organised a summit in Brussels in for those religions that have a historical enmity

10 The festival has been jointly organised by the collaborative forces of the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism, IMAN, Khayal Theatre and ArRum. Further information can be obtained from either <http://www.fairuk.org> or <http://www.arrum.co.uk>. The festival runs from 2 March to the 31 August 2002.

11 More information about the Federation of Student Islamic Societies can be obtained from their website, <http:www.fosis.org.uk>.

between them (both Greece 2 and 3). Interfaith projects can therefore bring about dialogue and interaction, and highlight in this particular context the shared ground that exists between the Abrahamic traditions. More localised examples of interfaith initiatives included multifaith prayers in Senate's Square Helsinki and the oration for peace organised by Pax Christi in Lisbon (Finland 2 and Portugal 2 respectively). Irrespective of their size or profile, such events can provide an excellent platform on which to build for the future. Such initiatives, irrespective of scale are therefore highly recommended.

Awareness programmes are another means by which these same objectives can be achieved, where a range of organisation can become involved. A number of excellent examples were identified, including in Ireland where the issue of Islamophobia is being incorporated into a national anti-racism programme, entitled "Know Racism" (Ireland 3). Similar initiatives can be organised and developed, where groups from different backgrounds can collaborate and combine to make a greater impact. Such organisations might include government organisations, NGOs, political parties, think-tanks, trade unions, ethnic minority organisations, foundations, student organisations and charities. One such example is where the Belgian NFP has launched a platform to fight increased racism by combining a number of different organisations to co-operate[12] (Belgium 2). The Danish NFP also mentioned a venture where various anti-racism organisations have been jointly campaigning to dispel both xenophobia and Islamophobia (Denmark 3). Such programmes should be developed and replicated across as much of the EU as possible.

All the initiatives that have been highlighted have the same foundations upon which they can build. They can promote knowledge and educate, increase awareness and understanding, and provide opportunities in which to enter into dialogue, promote mutual respect and demolish the constructs and prejudices that seem to be so prevalent in determining the perceptual barriers that exist between Muslim and non-Muslims in the EU. Any initiative or good practice that provides these opportunities and aids this process must be encouraged and are recommended as a vital aspect of the ongoing process. However, the examples highlighted here are merely a snapshot.

12 Further information about this can be found at, <http://www.antiracisme.be/educatie>

As a result of the sheer diversity of possibilities that exist, the scope for development cannot be understated particularly when the breadth of those able to get involved is taken into consideration. In building upon the "information offensive", this type of recommendation are very important.

Recommendations relating to the media

It is suggested that lines of communication are opened, developed or maintained with the media, where those concerned such as Muslim organisations could provide resources and information to journalists, producers, etc. in a bid to ensure that relevant terminology and labels are not used incorrectly or inappropriately. One such article in the Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* published a comprehensive review of Arabic and Islamic terminology in a constructive and balanced way, challenging inappropriate use (Finland 3). This type of action allows stereotypes and language to be challenged as part of the overall process of deconstructing Islamophobia, where concerned parties work together to eradicate value judgements in a medium that exists for and within the public sphere.

Interaction and co-operation between the media and Muslim organisations must also be established. One recommendation might be to reflect the way in which the Dutch media are openly working in conjunction with both the Muslim community and interested researchers to assess the impact of Islamophobia in the media. The Netherlands Association of Journalists also organised a conference entitled, "A Month After" to self-assess the way in which media organisations had covered the events in the US (both Netherlands 2). This highlights how co-operation, particularly institutional co-operation, can tackle issues relating to editorial autonomy and self-responsibility by simultaneously offering introspective and external analysis. Initiatives such as these provide a blueprint for other member states to follow where institutional concerns can be addressed and where, through co-operation, understanding and integration can also be promoted.

Another factor that was noted as ensuring particularly low levels of aggression and violence, was the opportunity to hear Muslim voices in the media. The provision of a platform for representative and majority speaking Muslim voices therefore would be an extremely positive development, although in reverse, unfair and disproportionate

coverage of extremist groups and organisations can be detrimental. This specific issue was touched upon by the Runnymede Trust where it stated that Muslim voices continue to experience difficulties "finding resonance" in the media. One suggestion to reverse this trend would be to include Muslim perspectives in the media not only when issues relating to Islam and Muslims are in the news, but on all social and current affairs topics as well. Others might be for the media to seek more representative voices to focus upon.

In extending this, it is also recommended that more Muslim organisations and indeed Muslim individuals attempt to get more involved in media affairs. In the UK, many organisations, including larger Muslim groups tend to employ a media officer through which opinions, comment and information can be better represented. Examples of these include the Muslim Council of Britain[13] which has recently been able to get its voice heard in many parts of the British media. Such activity has seen them engage in discussion and dialogue with, amongst others, the Prime Minister Tony Blair. This type of activity is recommended as it provides a means by which previously overlooked voices can at least begin to insist that they are heard.

When considering the media, a further suggestion might also be to develop a media awareness project such as that currently being undertaken by the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism in London[14]. Entitled the Media and Popular Culture Watch, it seeks to monitor the media's representation of Muslims and Islam. Both positive and negative instances are responded to with either praise or challenges being made as deemed appropriate. It is run by a relatively few number of people, where volunteers and supporters assist the monitoring process and supplement any subsequent lobbying. Similar projects might be undertaken elsewhere where the role and position of the media has been highlighted by the NFPs as somewhat questionable. The Swedish NFP noted that Swedish Committee Against Islamophobia had been established, although details of its role and projects were not included.

13 Information relating to the Muslim Council of Britain can be located at its website, <http://www.mcb.org.uk>

14 For more information about their Media Awareness and Monitoring Project, see their website at <http://www.fairuk.org>

Recommendations for EU Member states

The single most overriding issue that must be addressed by the EU member states is the issue of asylum seekers. It is suggested that this is so important that the subject must be addressed immediately both at member state level and EU level as well. Asylum seekers appear to be no more than political capital in some parts of the EU which is in no way satisfactory. Fear and hostility appear to be increasing towards this vulnerable group, so it is imperative that immediate action must be taken that will focus much more to a longer- term solution rather than a 'quick-fix'. Members states must begin to address their own respective responsibilities where the terms and conditions of the 1951 Geneva Convention must be adhered to. It is recommended that public dialogue and further research is sought on a EU-wide basis, where all countries are seen to be co-operating and accepting communal responsibility.

EU member states must also accept their responsibility towards all ethnic and other minority communities. To do this, measures must be taken and new initiatives implemented. Those such as the Irish government's anti-racism awareness programme, that is now to include Islamophobia as well, is a good case in point.

The problem of social marginalisation must be tackled and the practice of segregation must be addressed. Where such groups continue to retreat and become ever more introverted they no longer identify themselves with either a local, national or even European identity. This particular point was pinpointed by the French NFP and its fear of a "re-islamisation" of those French Muslim youth of Algerian descent (France 3). In the light of this it is highly recommended that practices which begin to address marginalisation and promote social inclusiveness should become immediate priorities. As part of this recommendation, the accessibility to both information and education should be considered and monitored.

Members of government, politicians and other high profile opinion makers must be seen to continue much of the good work that was seen following September 11. Many politicians, along with other significant figures made very positive public gestures regarding Islam and Muslims and these efforts must not be seen to be mere lip-service in a time of heightened tension. For the sake of both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities, these political and other leaders should take the opportunity to ensure that similar inclusive statements, attitudes and gestures become the norm rather than pre-emptive of expectations.

6. Bibliography

ALLIEVI, S. (1997), "Muslim minorities in Italy and their image in Italian media" in VERTOVEC, S. & PEACH, C. (eds.), *Islam in Europe: the politics of religion and community*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp.211-223.

DEL OLMO VICEN, N. (1996), "The Muslim community in Spain" in NONNEMAN, G. et al (eds.), *Muslim communities in the new Europe*, Reading: Ithaca, pp.303-314.

FERGUSON, R (1998), *Representing 'race': ideology, identity and the media*, London: Arnold.

HAFEZ, K. (2000), *Islam and the West in the mass media: fragmented images in a globalizing world*, Cresskill: Hampton Press.

HAFEZ, K. (2000), "The Middle East an Islam in Western mass media: towards a comprehensive theory of foreign reporting" in HAFEZ, K. (ed.), *Islam and the West in the mass media: fragmented images in a globalizing world*, Cresskill: Hampton Press, pp.27-65.

HJARNØ, J. (1996), "Muslims in Denmark" in NONNEMAN, G. et al (eds.), *Muslim communities in the new Europe*, Reading: Ithaca Press, pp.291-302.

NONNEMAN, G. (1996), "Muslim communities in the new Europe: themes and puzzles" in NONNEMAN, G. et al (eds.), *Muslim communities in the new Europe*, Reading: Ithaca. pp.3-23.

NONNEMAN, G. et al (1996.), *Muslim communities in the new Europe*, Reading: Ithaca.

POOLE, E. (1997), "Framing Islam: An analysis of newspaper coverage of Islam in the British press" in Hafez, K (ed.), *Islam and the West in the mass media: fragmented images in a globalizing world*, Cresskill: Hampton Press, pp.157-180.

RUNNYMEDE TRUST, THE (1997), *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*, Runnymede Trust: London.

VERTOVEC, S. & PEACH, C. (1997), *Islam in Europe: the politics of religion and community*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.